

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4095
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USINT BAGHDAD

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SUBJECT: THE PLO IN THE PEACE PROCESS: THE VIEW FROM ISRAEL

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 7815 (NOTAL), (B) TEL AVIV 8017 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN THE FACE OF SADAT'S EFFORT TO INCLUDE THE PLO
IN HIS PEACE OFFENSIVE, THE GOI HAS REITERATED ITS POLICY NOT
TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO. THE ISRAELIS EMPHASIZE PLO WEAKNESS
AFTER LEBANON, ITS INTERNAL SPLITS, AND ITS SUBORDINATION TO
THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE ARAB STATES. THE GOI IS SAYING
NOTHING ABOUT A PLO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE OR A MODIFIED PALES-
TINIAN POSITION ON SC RESOLUTION 242, BUT PROBABLY IS DOUBT-
FUL THAT A PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING WOULD PRODUCE
CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS. END SUMMARY

1. THE ISRAELI ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT "ARAB PEACE
OFFENSIVE"--WHICH THEY BELIEVE IS BEING ORCHESTRATED BY
EGYPT'S PRESIDENT SADAT--IS THAT SADAT IS JOCKEYING FOR
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NEGOTIATING POSITION ON BEHALF OF THE PLO AND THAT THIS

EXPLAINS HIS CALLS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND IN THE GAZA STRIP WITH A CORRIDOR AND FOR A REVIVED GENEVA CONFERENCE WHERE ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PLO, WOULD MAKE A "PEACE AGREEMENT". GIVEN THIS ASSESSMENT, THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN REPEATED STATEMENTS BY THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP THAT THEY DID NOT FAVOR A RECONVENED MEPC WITH PLO PARTICIPATION ALONG WITH THEIR OWN UN RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RECONVENING OF THE CONFERENCE UNDER ITS ORIGINAL TERMS AND WITH ITS ORIGINAL PARTICIPANTS, I.D., WITHOUT THE PLO. SIMILARLY, THE STATEMENT BY THE ISRAELI UN SPOKESMAN DECEMBER 8 THAT ISRAEL OPPOSED A COMMON ARAB DELEGATION AT THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE--ON THE GROUNDS THAT INDIVIDUAL ISSUES WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED WITH SEPARATE ARAB DELEGATIONS--IS AN EFFORT TO UNDERCUT AN INTER-ARAB COMPROMISE WHOSE PURPOSE WOULD BE TO GET THE PLO INTO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE THROUGH A BACK DOOR AND WHICH THEY ARE AFRAID MAY SEEM PLAUSIBLE ENOUGH TO GAIN WIDESPREAD SUPPORT.

2. ON THE HOME FRONT, THE GOI REAFFIRMED, IN A KNESSET DEBATE LAST MONTH, THAT IT WOULD NOT HONOR CONTACTS WITH THE PLO. ON THE SAME OCCASION, THE GOVERNMENT ALSO DENIED THAT TALKS BETWEEN PRIVATE ISRAELIS AND PLO REPRESENTATIVES HAD ANY OFFICIAL INSPIRATION OR RESPONSIBILITY. IN THE CABINET MEETING DECEMBER 12, PRIME MINISTER RABIN REJECTED A SUGGESTION BY TOURISM MINISTER KOL (INDEPENDENT LIBERAL PARTY) THAT THE CABINET DISCUSS ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE TO THE PALESTINIAN AND THE PLO AND SAID THAT THE GOI PRINCIPLE RULING OUT NEGOTIATIONS WITH TERRORISTS STILL HELD GOOD. RECENT NEWS-REPORTING PLO DEVELOPMENTS (SUCH AS QADDOUMI'S STATEMENT THAT THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL WILL DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE; VARIOUS PLO STATEMENTS THAT ACCEPTANCE OF A WEST BANK/GAZA STATE WOULD IMPLY RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL; AND REPORTS THAT THE PNC MIGHT ALTER ITS POSTURE ON SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242) HAVE THUS FAR DRAWN REMARKABLY LITTLE COMMENT HERE, APART FROM LEFT-ORIENTED ELEMENTS LIKE RAKAH AND MOKED.

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3. IN OUR RECENT DISCUSSION WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS, THEY HAVE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE DOUBT THAT THE ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY SYRIA AND JORDAN, WOULD SERIOUSLY SUPPORT ANY MOVE THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE PLO. SADAT, THEY ARGUE, HAS AT PRESENT MORE FLEXIBILITY (THAN THE OTHER ARABS) TO USE THE PLO FOR HIS OWN INTERESTS, BUT WHEN THE TIME COMES NEITHER HE NOR ANY OTHER ARAB WILL HAVE ANY QUALMS IN DISCARDING THE RECENTLY-REAFFIRMED

RABAT RESOLUTIONS, JUST AS THEY HAD IGNORED THE KHARTOUM
"NOES".

4. GIVEN THIS NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVE, THERE APPEARS TO BE
LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR THE GOI TO COMMENT IN ADVANCE ON
WHAT MIGHT COME OUT OF THE ANTICIPATED PALESTINIAN
NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, BE IT A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE
OR A MODIFIED PALESTINIAN POSITION ON SC RESOLUTION 242;
IT WOULD NOT BE IN KEEPING WITH ITS EXPERIENCE OR PRE-
DILECTION FOR THE GOI TO BE OPTIMISTIC OR EVEN HOPEFUL ABOUT
THE PROSPECTS FOR ANYTHING PRODUCTIVE (IN ISRAEL'S VIEW)
COMING OUT OF THE PNC MEETING. IT CERTAINLY HARBORS NO
ILLUSIONS THAT THE PNC WILL SUDDENLY ACCEPT A DEMILITARIZED,
RUMP STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP, COMPLETE WITH
JEWISH SETTLEMENTS AND IDF PRESENCE--WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY
THE DEFINITION OF ANY PALESTINIAN ENTITY CONCEIVABLY
ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL. THE GOI PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT
DIFFERENCES OVER TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES
WITHIN THE PLO ITSELF AND, AT A SUBMERGED BUT (TO THE
ISRAELIS) FAR IMPORTANT LEVEL, AMONG THE ARAB STATES
STILL POSE LARGE OBSTACLES TO "RESULTS" AT THE PNC.
THESE INTRA-PALESTINIAN AND INTER-ARAB DIFFERENCES
WOULD SEEM TO THE ISRAELIS TO BE FAIRLY GOOD INSURANCE
THAT NO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE WILL BE FORMED AND, EVEN
OF ONE IS, THAT ITS TERRITORIAL, LEGAL AND REPRESENTATION
ASPECTS WOULD BE SO NEBULOUS AND VAGUELY DEFINED THAT
ISRAEL COULD IGNORE AND DISREGARD IT. ISRAEL WOULD ALSO,
OF COURSE, DISCOUNT ANY PNC ATTEMPTS TO FINESSE THE
ISSUES OF PLO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND SC RESOLUTION 242
(BY, FOR EXAMPLE, GRANTING ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AUTHORITY
TO ACT LATER--SEE PARIS 36089).

5. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE
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MEDIA REPORTING OR COMMENT TO DATE ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. THE HENRY
TANNER ARTICLE IN THE TIMES AND THE IHT ON DECEMBER 9
MAY HOWEVER ELICIT LOCAL PRESS COMMENT IN THE COMING DAYS.
DUNNIGAN

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